

Radenca of Meridia

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Summary: Tarkin's young daughter is exiled to a remote school because of her sex. Lord Vader takes pity on the under appreciated child, and Radenca's life takes some interesting turns.

Radenca of Meridia

Radenca Tarkin knew that she had been unwanted. More than unwanted, her father scorned the sight of her. Would one insignificant cromisone really have made a difference? Yes, in her father's eyes. She was female, thus barely even human. He'd wanted a son, an heir, anything but her. Instead he was given a brilliant, commanding, focused, obedient... daughter. Only a daughter. Nature's ultimate sick joke, in the elder Tarkin's eyes.

He hated her. She could see it in his cold blue gray eyes, and that was why she was here. This forsaken place, this joke of a school, almost a prison camp. She was tutored here by droids, along with the quiet staff. She longed to accompany her Father on his missions thorough the vast blackness of space, or apply for the academy, but very few even knew Tarkin had a daughter, and he preferred it that way. Almost no one knew, with the notable exception of Lord Vader.

He'd brought her to this world, her father hadn't wanted to face the accusation in her eyes. She strongly suspected that the Dark Lord had offered to serve as her escort. She'd known him since she was very young, and had always been suspiciously kind to her. She had become aware of just how much he hated taking orders. There had been none of that kind of bitterness as he practically welcomed her aboard the Executor. She had taken a liberty, and dared to ask him why.

He complimented her perceptiveness, and she returned gracious thanks, not allowing the issue to slide away. "I have foreseen you will do my kin and I a great service someday." He revealed to her. She was surprised, she hadn't even considered the man as having kin. A foolish oversight, she supposed, for what was he but a man? "I am told you are to be schooled classically, focusing on," she curled her

lip in disgust, knowing what was coming next. "deportment." He finished. "I take it from your reaction you are not pleased by this." She stared at him, but said nothing. "Speak your thoughts, Radenca, you reveal them anyway." Vader admonished. She sighed, then stood and paced as she spoke. "Of course not. How could I be? How could anyone with pride want to become a mere bargaining chip? I would be overjoyed to be doing this for a real reason, deportment is necessary for a politician or aide or something respectful, but an Imperial Center aristocrat? An human ornament? The very idea disgusts me!" She gave a sharp laugh. "I'll study how to curtsy until I'm old enough to be interesting. I want to join the academy, I can be a better grand admiral than has ever been seen before!" I want power. I want command. I want to stop being a mistake and to be able to carry myself with pride. I want someone to love me, can no one understand this? She thought with a passion she would never have put into words.

"I know you can Radenca. You're capable of it. But it is not my place to countermand the position of your father." He said with honest sympathy and understanding of the needs she had left unspoken. Father. Oh how Tarkin abused that privilege, that sacred word. He had known for quite some time that he had a son, possibly more, somewhere. Amidala, his lady, his queen, had taken him, slipping into hiding for the boy's protection. Protection? He had not been so deluded by slavery to Palpatine that he would ever hurt his child, or his love. He was privately envious of Imperial Court's contented parents, all secure in the knowledge that they would have the privilege of watching their children grow up. Tarkin squandered his gifts, indulging along with the rest of the Emperor's forces in some idiotic primitive superstition that a precious child was worthless because of it's sex. Radenca was a good person, brimming with potential, a promising commander and engineer. Couldn't Tarkin see for himself how lucky he was?

Vader sighed. No, he couldn't. And he didn't comprehend the child's pain over his pettiness. Thus Vader's early fondness for little Radenca had developed into a more protective feeling. He'd offered to take her to her new home himself, not wanting her with complete strangers as well as the father who thought her below contempt. Radenca was looking at him now with a little brave hope, focusing the full power of the steely Tarkin blue-gray orbs, unconsciously toying with the one natural black stripe amidst a sea of blond. He considered her. "I suppose I could... adjust your computers. This little oversight of your talents should be fixed. Does a program with heavy influence on mathematics and piloting interest you? Or perhaps history and tactics?" She didn't squeal her delight. Radenca Tarkin would have never done something so uncomposed. Instead she stood, eyes full and brimming with thanks. "Both, sir. I can't begin. It may seem small to you, but it will make the whole course of my life so much smother." He waved a hand. "You will repay the Imperium ten fold, Radenca. You'll have to put extra focus on your deportment, he must believe you're working hard. I'll arrange for you to be connected to the holonet..."

He decided for a while on all matter of things, what military clearance level was reasonable for her studies, what equipment she should have access to, everything else. Radenca just slipped into her bliss. Maybe her life wouldn't be the hell she'd imagined. Maybe things might just turn out all right.

Months later Radenca snapped her eyes open, away from memory and paid more attention to the battle map she was supposed to be critiquing. When she became involved with work here, her tyrant father and frightened, demure mother didn't matter any more. She could see the loyal Imperials she could save with just the perfect plan, the steadfast generations to come from the lives she had saved, all with Radenca to thank. Each one could look back and adore her memory. The jungle planet Meridia might be a sort of prison camp, but she was determined that it would harbor the greatest strategist the Empire had ever seen.

Lord Vader visited Radenca every so often. He seemed to feel he was responsible for her fate, having tampered with the adult Tarkin's wishes. Radenca certainly didn't mind, in fact she looked forward to his visits. She was fourteen now, though her parents had sent nothing to mark the occasion, and though the curriculum was as tasking and interesting as ever, she longed to be in the outside world, becoming a part of it again, seeing new faces, growing up. At Lord Vader's last visit, he'd asked her how she fared. "Fine." She replied. Fine? She thought incredulously. How could I be? All I want is to get off this rock for a while, I haven't left this place or seen anyone but you and this staff for two years! Even the supply runs are droid operated! She had considered escaping, but the small crafts provided for her use were mere short range fighters, meant for planetary and short space journeys. And where would she have gone? "Ah," said Lord Vader as if he didn't believe her in the slightest. "So you're fine. May I remind you that I possess telepathy, Radenca? What you truly think is quite clear." Radenca blushed. Quiet and understanding the need for obedience in a command structure, she was not prone to such bursts of emotion. "It's just that I wonder if I can integrate into society again. Will the military accept me? After all, I'm a girl." "I promise Radenca, I will ensure it. After all, they make exception for the talented. Thrawn was granted entrance, was he not? And he was an alien." Radenca smiled. She had hopped, but she needed reassurance someone would champion her cause. Lord Vader was known to be fair, undiscriminating and someone who took advantage of talent when he saw it. This was, to Radenca, clear proof of those rumors.

"Still, I can see your need for companionship your own age. Perhaps..." He trailed off. "What?" asked Radenca hopefully. "Nothing for now, Radenca. If it doesn't occur as I plan, you will be disappointed without cause." She didn't attempt to question him further.

Months later, he returned, and this time he was not alone. A compact young girl accompanied him uncertainly. She was odd looking, carrying multiple weapons and bearing sternly bound red hair. Radenca fingered her own black streak as she approached them. "Greetings. Radenca. This," he began with a gesture at the fierce red-head "Is Mara Jade, the Emperor's Hand. She is an excellent assassin, but the Emperor feels her education is a bit lacking. He wishes her to be able to slip into diplomatic circles, and unfortunately she knows almost nothing of deportment, culture, or higher class tutoring." Mara made an exaggerated face. "Why do forks and dances matter when you can shoot?" Vader sighed tiredly. "Haven't we been over this? It is your duty to the Emperor as his hand to follow his orders. He wants this for a reason. What good is a spy who can't gather information and fit into the right social circles?" Chastised, Mara turned to Radenca and stuck out a hand. "Mara Jade. And you?" Radenca smiled. Mara looked honest, if tough. She thought she could like her. "Radenca Tarkin.

And I don't only study deportment." She said, mentally promising herself to let Mara in on all the curriculum modifications that had been made. "Radenca, that's old Coruscant for cunning, isn't it?" Radenca nodded, pleased. "I have to know it," Mara explained, "It comes up in a lot of old encoding frequencies. Tarkin? I didn't know he had any children." Her mouth went dry. "He doesn't like to talk about me much." She said shortly.

After informing the staff of their new charge, Vader left, informing both girls he'd be back within the standard year to report to the Emperor on their progress. So that's why he visits me. Radenca thought. The Emperor is interested on what kind of officer I'll be, If I could succeed my father. She led Mara to her quarters, opposite her own. "Well, sit down and tell me." Mara commanded. "Hmm?" Asked Radenca. "You don't think I believe Lord Vader takes to checking on Tarkin's daughter as she learns to be a trophy bride. What's really going on?" Radenca sat down on a chair in the otherwise bare room. "I study to be an aristocrat, yes, but that's just the surface of what I do here. I learn all those cultured things, and you will too I suppose, but what I really do is learn my father's job. Strategy, mathematical theory, we even have a few TIE's to work on and fly." Mara looked pleased.

"Your turn. You seem to like our Lord. Why?" Mara cocked her head. "He saved my life once, the first time we worked together. He barley knew me, he didn't have to, yet he did. We're what you could call professional allies now, even" her mouth twisted, "friends. He trusts me anyway, but not with everything. How about you?" Radenca shrugged. "He thinks I can be a good admiral, better than my father. Beyond that, he told me he has foreseen that I will do him a great service one day. Actually, he said he and his kin." Mara's eyes widened as she appeared to digest the information. "You do know," The hand said cautiously, "that he's a father. " "No!" said Radenca with shock. "Is that what he meant by kin?" "It wouldn't surprise me." "Well, who?" "I don't know," said Mara, "Even he has barley any information. All the Emperor has told me is his birth name, and that he might have a son somewhere." Mara omitted the fact that he had once been a Jedi, Radenca probably didn't even know what they were. "How old are you?" Tarkin asked. "Fifteen. You?" "I turned thirteen a few weeks ago." They looked at each other, separated only by silence. "You know what?" Mara asked. "I don't think I mind you. A few more weeks, I might even like you." Radenca laughed. "That's too bad, I can't stand you." Radenca laughed, to show the hurt looking Mara that it had been a joke. Slowly Mara smiled, then laughed too. Things were looking up.

It was bad news. She could see it in the grave way he carried himself, and she was prepared. "Radenca." He said softly, as if he wanted to mutter 'poor little Radenca' into the silence. "There's been an announcement at court this year. I came as soon as was permissible. It seems you're father has an illegitimate son, two years younger than you, born of an officer under his command named Lita Handrec. The two are now married. Your mother suffered an unfortunate accident earlier this year. She fell, her body was recovered, but no suspects have been named." "Suspects?" She asked, throat tight. "There is no forensic evidence. The perpetrator used the utmost care, yet I believe she was murdered." "It was my father." Radenca told him without emotion. The Sith Lord said nothing. Mara had come, looked outraged at all the right parts for Radenca's benefit. As a court veteran and an assassin, Radenca had no doubt

that she could see the cold strategy behind the move, yet she was grateful for the effort.

Mara moved to take her hand, and Radenca didn't stop her. "It seems he would take the place of grand admiral, does it not?" She muttered darkly. Vader shook his head. "He is by the book, loyal and intelligent. But he is not as cunning or inventive as you are. He will never be a better admiral than you are, unless you let him. It will be harder now. He is not ignorant, and he is a male, which you should no matters in our military. But he isn't you Radenca. You can beat him." "My mother." said Radenca softly. "She did nothing. She was- she did everything for him." Vader nodded. "He is not kind, Radenca. I tell you the truth, I have little respect for him. More than that, it is not my place to say to his child. I must leave, I am expected. Now more than ever, you have my full support. Will you be all right?" She nodded, not looking at his eyes, and for once he didn't chastise her for killing her emotion. "Mara, Radenca, keep each other safe. You do not live in a gentle world, and I regret to say you may have shocks like this in the future. You're strength speaks volumes, and I think you just might make it. Good luck." Both nodded. "And you," Mara called. "Good luck as well. The force whispers, you're so close." He gave her a look. "I won't ask how you know about- that. But I hope you're right."

Mara pulled Radenca into her room, where she still couldn't cry. "What did you mean, close?" Radenca asked to distract herself. "His child." Mara said quietly. "He knows it too. His mind is clouded with it. Past all they say he's done, I think he deserves that happiness. He saved you, Radenca, by helping you here, just like he saved me." Radenca smiled faintly. "I know. Come on, let's take a walk. I don't feel like mourning her or studying for the future, I feel like living right now." "Well," said Mara gently, "Then that's what we'll do."

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